

*An Essay*  
*on*  
*Dysentery*

*Respectfully Submitted*

*To the Faculty of the*

*Homoeopathic Medical College*

*of Pennsylvania*  
*on the*

*Twenty fourth day of January*

*One Thousand eight hundred & fifty three*

*by*

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*of New Hampshire*

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state of the lower portion of it in particular &  
characterized by the presence of violent pains frequent  
purging & but for the most part greatly arising to  
stool and discharge of a thin bloody fluid.

The disease differs not in form and character  
but also in degree.

The point which characterizes this disease is a rupture  
not along the course of the tube and not in the  
intestinal direction and not in one of which way  
relating to the different points of the circumference  
the progress from the bowels differ in quantity and  
quality & and in frequency of pain to a point  
perhaps a hundred in the course of twenty-four  
hours.

The duration of the disease is dependent upon inflamed  
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in quantity or so it undergoes change similar to

Dysentery is a peculiar disease of the intestinal canal - of the lower portion of it in particular; characterized by the presence of violent pains; frequent painful, but for the most part fruitless urging to stool, and discharge of a slimy bloody fluid.

The disease differs not only in form and character but also in degree.

The pains which characterize this disease are experienced along the course of the colon and rectum, the violence, direction and continuence of which vary according to the different forms of the complaint: the passages from the bowels differ in quantity and quality, and in frequency, vary from ten upwards to perhaps, a hundred in the course of twenty four hours.

The secretion of the disease is dependant upon inflammation, and is either intestinal mucus, merely increased in quantity, or else it undergoes a change similar to



the secretions in other catarrhal affections; being at different times of a different nature thereby constituting the different kinds of dysentery spoken of in the several medical works.

Concerning the essence of this disease, I am unable to give a true hypothesis. Not having had sufficient experience myself to form an opinion; neither can I from the numerous different writers on this subject find any considerable number who agree:

But of all the different theories and speculations the one which seems the most truth like and admissible is the theory of external causes; which in the form of miasms, impregnate the system and in this way impair the state of the blood, and thereby cause a decrease of the vital stimulus which is so necessary to a healthy state of the organism.

Under the above mentioned atmospheric constitution this disease may be brought on by the following causes:

Living in crowded dwellings where the atmosphere becomes impure by being overcharged with Nitrogen, and Carbonic acid gas, at the same time deficient in Hydrogen. Also the sudden application of cold to the stomach, when very much below the natural temperature; as drinking iced water or eating iced confectionary when in a state of considerable heat; eating flatulent herbs; unripe fruits; or food difficult of digestion; drinking impure water especially when it is impregnated with decomposed animal or vegetable matter; also continued hot dry days with cool nights.

These causes seem to render the animal frame relaxed and debilitated by their high atmospheric exposures: The digestive and intestinal functions partake of this debility and are more easily irritated.

The mucous membrane of the colon is evidently the general seat of the disease; at times however in protracted and complicated cases, the cecum and



small intestines, especially in cases with typhoid symptoms and in some forms of epidemic dysentery.

Some writers, hold to the opinion that the epidemic germ never prevails unless there be some endemic or epidemic fever with which the dysentery can combine.

The characteristic symptoms in acute cases are very severe pain in the abdomen, altho the seat of the pain is mostly low down in the rectum with sensation as from a load in the rectum, this is accompanied with a feeling as if the feces were on the point of being expelled.

This produces a constant desire in the patient to evacuate the bowels, which action is accompanied with violent straining, to rid himself of the load or irritation, but these efforts afford but slight relief, as only small quantities of mucus, or what is more common shreds of mucus mixed with blood resembling the washings or scrapings of fresh beef. These discharges do not generally contain any fecal matter; altho at times there are voided small hard

balls or lumps of fecal matter called scybala; which cause acute pains and great suffering to the patient. Frequently the color of the discharges ~~are~~<sup>is</sup> varied, being either green, blackish, or reddish, as above described with fetid and very disagreeable odor which is peculiar to dysentery. Sometimes the inflammation is reflected on to the bladder, which causes great pain and difficulty in voiding the urine; Also the stomach at times sympathizes causing nausea and vomiting.

It has been observed by several eminent writers that the dejections are more frequent during the night especially towards morning.

On the simpler forms the fever is slight, but in the more aggravated forms the fever in the first stage is generally of a high grade, with full hard pulse; hot dry skin; face flushed; <sup>u</sup> tongue furred; violent thirst, headache &c: If the disease is not arrested the pulse soon becomes small, weak, and rapid; the patient becomes restless



sleepless, and passes dreamy disturbed nights: The features become sharpened, the surface grows cold. Also the extremities are continually cold. Hiccough in this stage is apt to set in, which distresses the patient very much: the feces pass involuntary, cold perspiration covers the skin, silent delirium or a comatose state, which generally terminate in death.

The disease if erythritic runs its course in from seven to eleven or fourteen days; the synochal variety in seven days, while the typhus or torpid form lasts from twenty one to twenty eight days.

The prognosis depends upon the form, The typhous being the most dangerous. The contagious being more dangerous than the simple. Upon the violence and quantity of the evacuations, The smaller the quantity of mucus the larger the quantity of blood: the paler and more discolored it appears, the greater the danger. Upon the emetition of the abdomen, the more distended it is the more painful



it is, and the greater the danger. The sudden disappearance of the pain is a very serious symptom, and generally is a sign of approaching death. Also in the typhoid form the outbreak of an exanthemata, and the setting in of delirium are very unfavourable symptoms.

The treatment of dysentery is determined in part by the exciting cause, and in part by the form and character of the attack, each individual form requires its special treatment, to be modified according to circumstances, In the commencement of the treatment every thing which would irritate the intestinal canal must be carefully withheld from the patient; hence the use of cold water as a drink must be denied, and its place supplied with thin mucilaginous drinks, such as barley water rice water &c. The feet & belly must be carefully kept warm, and particular attention must be paid to the cleanliness of the patient and room.

If the disease be inflammatory we can commence the

treatment with, Aconite, which may be followed by  
Nux., Merc. sol., Sulph. acid., &c according to their respective  
indications.

Aconite. will be most frequently indicated in the commencement  
of the disease, where it is accompanied by tearing rheumatic  
pains, full pulse, violent chills, discharges thin and watery  
or mixed with mucus tinged with blood. Abdomen tense  
and painful denoting the commencement of inflammation.

### Chamomilla

Is most servicable if after Acon we find the  
fever still present, thirst, rheumatic pains especially in  
the head, continual restlessness and tossing about, agitation  
nausea, bitter taste, bilious stools, also in the first stage  
before tenesmus sets in.

### Pulsatilla

If the stools are chiefly mucus, or streaked  
with small quantities of blood, nausea, coated tongue  
bitter taste, heaviness of the head, and inclination to weep.



Bryonia.

may be used with advantage when the attack occurs during the hot weather, and is connected with typhoid symptoms, in the first stages. &c.

Mercurius Solub.

is one of our most important remedies, and may follow after Chin., Nux &c. The evacuations consist of the bloody mucus scrapings which are so characteristic of dysentery accompanied with violent tenesmus, fever, cutting pains in the abdomen, the pains being worse at night prolapus ani, &c.

Mercurius Cor Solub.

is the principle remedy in sporadic as well as epidemic dysenteries, when the stools consist of pure blood or putrid yellowish, greenish or darker colored stools, or frothy mucus mixed with blood; or as above the scrapings &c

### Nit Acid.

After mere if the sanguineous stools continue with constant pressing in the rectum, frequent urging to urinate with brown or muddy urine, coldness of limbs, dryness of throat, thirst, delirium, intermittent unequal pulse, &c.

### Sulph Acid.

The stools thin bloody, fetid, urine brownish red, aphthae, petechiae &c it resembles Nit acid in many points.

### Arsenicum.

When the stools are excessively frequent, black, bloody, acid, putrid, very fetid, and at times pass voluntary, urine becomes offensive & is retained or passes involuntary, dry cracked tongue; spasmodic hicough great thirst with aggravation after drinking, great restlessness cold perspiration, delirium, sudden ceasing of pains, hippocratic countenance, & other typhoid symptoms.



Sulphur

Is most usefull where the disease is not disposed to yield to the foregoing remedies, & where we suspect a psoric taint in the system.

Carbo veg

In those desperate cases where all of the symptoms of a typhoid form prevail; an also resemble those of, Arsenicum.

There are also several other remedies which will be of great use; accordingly as they are indicated. Some of them are of great importance in the treatment of this disease: I will only mention their names; without giving a detail of their symptoms. they are the following Nux Vom., Colocynth., Colechicum.

Cantharides, Veratrum, China, Rhus Tox., Capsicum, Petroleum,

Aloe, Ipecacuanh., Plumbum, acet., Dulcamara.

Antimonium Crud., Digitalis: Sulphur & Manganum

have been used with benefit in chronic tenesmus remaining after dysentery.